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1954/12/16

File - Diem

Secret

Memorandum for the Record

December 16, 1954

This morning, 16 December, I saw General Ely off for Paris. He informed me that he had seen Diem yesterday afternoon and, while accepting appointment of Minh as Minister of Defense, told Diem that he still felt strongly that Quat should be taken into the government. Diem replied that the sects were strongly opposed to Quat and feared him as a potential successor to Diem.

Diem went on to say that he felt that he now had the Army fully back of him and that everywhere he went he was applauded by the people and had increasing public support. He said that reports of Viet Minh penetration were greatly exaggerated. In brief, Ely said that he seemed amazingly content and optimistic and, as Ely put it, "reminded me of a man in a dream."

I told Ely that I had had reports that Diem had said that Ely had agreed with him that this was no time to risk a political upheaval by the appointment of Quat to the Ministry of Defense against the wishes of the sects. Diem was also reported as saying that Ely's approach to the current situation was very much different from mine.

Ely promptly denied that any such inference could have been drawn from anything he said to Diem and reminded me that this is one of Diem's tactics to attempt to create divisive views between French and Americans. He reiterated that he had urged Diem to take Quat into the government.

Just before his departure Ely called me to one side again and said that he had just spoken to Foreign Minister Tran Van Do, who was at the airport, and had urged him to convey to Diem Ely's firm recommendation that Quat be brought into the government.

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